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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: TAIWAN'S UN REFERENDUM AND PRESIDENT CHEN SHUI-BIAN

11. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese- and English-language dailies August 30 devoted much space again to U.S. Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte's remarks on Taiwan's UN referendum as well as President Chen Shui-bian's trip to Latin America, with an emphasis on his transit in Alaska and his reaction to D/S Negroponte's statement.

12. In terms of editorials and commentaries, the pro-independence "Liberty Times" said in an editorial that the U.S. opposition to the referendum on Taiwan's UN bid violates its own principles. The English-language pro-independence "Taipei Times" said in its editorial that the United States, as a friend, should not oppose Taiwan people exercising their right to vote in a referendum. A column in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily" said President Chen Shui-bian is challenging both the United States and China at the same time. A "China Times" news analysis said U.S. objection is helpful for the DPP in upcoming elections. "United Daily News" questioned President Chen Shui-bian's motives in an editorial. The English-language "China Post" said Chen's trick cannot fool the United States. End summary.

A) "U.S. Objection to Taiwan UN Referendum Violates Its Own Basic Principles [lit. the spirit of its foundation] and Democratic Values"

An editorial of the pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 720,000] said (8/30):

"... A series of recent U.S. moves highlighted its clear opposition against Taiwan's holding a referendum on its UN bid. Therefore, Negroponte's public remarks did not come as a surprise. However, they make all people in Taiwan feel regret and need solemnly to protest to this long-term ally. We believe the United States obviously is not objective about the universal value of a referendum as a means directly to demonstrate public opinion and as an indispensable part of the democratic system. Wouldn't it be ridiculous for the leader of the democratic world to be afraid of a referendum? The U.S. opposition seems targeted at the broader international strategic level. That is, [they are] worried that China's over-reaction to the referendum on Taiwan's UN bid will hurt the current stability of the international order. As the United States can neither predict nor control China's behavior, it has turned the pressure on Taiwan, hoping that Taiwan can make concessions and give up pushing for the UN referendum.

"... As for the accusation that Taiwan is breaking the status quo, it is absolutely reversing truth and falsehood, because what Taiwan is doing now is to prevent, by going through the process of making Taiwan a normal nation, the Taiwan independence status quo from being sabotaged. It is China that is breaking the status quo by aiming its missiles at Taiwan and threatening military invasion. Is the U.S. government unable to distinguish such a simple fact? Moreover, the U.S. opposition to the referendum, in fact, violates

its own basic principles and democratic values and is [equal to] succumbing to vicious forces. Once the United States loses its core values, the victims will not be limited to the democracy- and freedom-loving people of Taiwan. It will also be a sign that the U.S. super-power position is collapsing."

B) "What Does 'Friendship' Mean?"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" [circulation: 30,000] editorialized (8/30):

"If the U.S. State Department has a list of least favorite people, President Chen Shui-bian must surely now be on it. U.S. Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte made the U.S. stance on Chen's

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proposed UN referendum known on Monday, branding the proposal a 'mistake' and warning it would be seen by Washington as an attempt to change the cross-strait 'status quo.'

"It could be that some State Department officials are so frustrated with Chen that they are pounding the table in their strategy rooms, complaining about the 'trouble-maker,' all the while scratching their heads and wondering why Chen is being so adamant this time in pushing for the referendum.

"... It is understood that the United States has come under increasing pressure from China on the referendum issue. But what is China afraid of? Doesn't the Beijing administration often trumpet that China 'places its hope in the people of Taiwan?' So what is there to fear in having the people of Taiwan raise their collective voice to tell the world what they want?

"And why does the United States -- the Big Brother promoter of democracy -- all of a sudden fail to understand that exercising this universal right is a hallmark of democracy?

SHUI-BIAN

"In the Hong Kong-based Phoenix TV interview, Negroponte reiterated the U.S.' friendship for Taiwan and Washington's support for Taiwan's democracy.

"But what does it mean to 'support Taiwan's democracy' and then work to the contrary and suppress Taiwanese from taking part in a referendum? What does it mean to 'be Taiwan's friend' but then show disrespect for the decisions and will of that friend?

"Sure, the United States has its national interests to look after, but so does Taiwan. Chen, as the elected president, has the responsibility to work in the best interests of Taiwanese and continue to follow the people's call for the universal values of democracy and respect for human rights.

"... The U.S. State Department should understand that it is not Chen who is being adamant in pushing the referendum, but Taiwanese themselves -- the true masters and stakeholders in the nation -- who are backing Chen up in the wish to exercise this universal right."

C) "Anti-China Turned into Anti-U.S."

Columnist Antonio Chiang wrote in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily" [circulation: 530,000] (8/30):

"Big nations and powers can do whatever they want. Small countries and the weak are forced to do what they have to do. It is a common practice that the United States interferes with domestic affairs of other countries. This is the nature of politics played by the powers. However, not only the [U.S.] objection to Taiwan's referendum violates the democratic values it advocates globally, the tone of its statement is like lecturing to a small grand child. It is as if the United States is the guardian of Taiwan's interest. This face of hegemony is really very nasty.

"... But if without U.S. endorsement, [Taiwan] could find no way to [join] other international organizations. The U.S. open objection to Taiwan's UN bid is a huge blow to Taiwan's efforts to participate in the international community because, without U.S. support, Taiwan's international space will get narrower and narrower.

"As a ruling party, the DPP should know that Taiwan's democracy is not only an internal issue, but will have external effects. While there is much overlapping national interests between the United States and China, the common interests between the United States and Taiwan are reducing. One can hardly find a common agenda now. It is much to the disadvantage of Taiwan that the United States is dealing with its Taiwan policy under the framework of its China policy.

"A-Bian attended the anti-America party organized by the Sandinist regime in Nicaragua. It is such a serious matter in the international arena. Yet he was doing it like a child driving a big car; anti-China plus anti-U.S., challenging two giants at the same time. He himself may find it a lot of fun. But it is a big disaster for Taiwan."

D) "U.S. Obstruction Helpful for the Green Camp to Solicit Votes"

A news analysis by journalist Chiang Hui-cheng in the centrist, KMT-leaning "China Times" [circulation: 400,000] noted (8/30):

"Chen Shui-bian finally ended his troublesome visit to the allies after bearing the humiliation of low-keyed Transits through Alaska and putting away stickers promoting Taiwan's UN bid. Now that the most embarrassing scenes are over, for Bian, there will be no greater obstruction any more. The stronger the United States objection, the more this diplomatic pressure will be transferred to helpful forces for the DPP in elections.

"... Compared to the turbulence resulting from the two-state statement and the announcement to cease the operation of the National Unification Council, the U.S. side has never been so swift and resolute like this: no more special envoys, no more diplomatic communications, and even the commercial considerations regarding arms procurement were put aside. Then there is no need for superficial rhetoric and what should be said has been brought on the table and expressed thoroughly and directly.

"... Taiwan indeed enjoys no diplomatic space as it is caught in between the United States and China. Bian correctly took advantage of the U.S. insufficiency in dealing with the Asia-Pacific situation and link Taiwan's anxiety to the U.S. anxiety. However, if the little embarrassment of Bian's transit [in the United States] can be changed into votes, then probably it is 'worth it.' This is Bian's most important calculation for his tour this time."

E) "Tell Us President Chen: What Is the Meaning of This?"
SHUI-BIAN

The pro-unification "United Daily News" [circulation: 400,000] editorialized (8/30):

"... Chen Shui-bian's manipulation of the UN bid referendum is entirely out of selfish and political trickery motives. He is eager to bleach and dye the 'corrupted Chen Shui-bian' into the 'Taiwan independence Chen Shui-bian.' Then he could occupy the commanding position as the standard-bearer of Taiwan independence in order to hijack the presidential elections and the political situation afterwards. Therefore, he is maneuvering the referendum without concern over the consequences. In fact, as the above analysis, he knows very well that [Taiwan] cannot 'successfully enter the UN.' He just wants to play with the 'failure bid to the UN' in order to arouse public anger. He also knows clearly that these are only games played for elections. But he does not care if the nation needs to pay a long-term price which cannot be compensated.

"Tell us, what is the meaning of this that the U.S.-Taiwan relations are damaged to such a degree because of the 'fake issue' of the 'UN bid referendum'? The United States downgraded the transit treatments to Chen Shui-bian. When asked if this is humiliating to Chen Shui-bian, the State Department spokes person said 'The United States respects the people of Taiwan very much.' This is a more obvious denial of Chen Shui-bian's qualification to represent the people of Taiwan after U.S. authorities advised Chen Shui-bian to demonstrate 'leadership.' Now the Department of State has played brinksmanship with the referendum. Although Chen Shui-bian deserves

his own-made disgrace, the U.S.-Taiwan friendship and trust was destroyed by Chen Shui-bian to such , how is Taiwan going to get together with the United States? To hurt seriously the 'real U.S.-Taiwan relations' because of the 'fake UN bid issue' -- what is the meaning of this? ..."

F) "Chen Shui-bian's Trick Can't Fool the U.S."

The conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" [circulation: 30,000] editorialized (8/30):

"... President Chen Shui-bian and the DPP are not very good at bettering the quality of life for the people of the island. Over the past years, a growing number of the island's residents have lived a life of hardship and misery. Taiwan's economic performance, which used to outshine that of all over 'Asian Tigers,' has fallen behind that of South Korea, Singapore and Hong Kong.

"The presidential election next year may well bring the DPP's rule to an end. If that happens, President chen and some of his family members will face imprisonment. He is trying everything possible to prevent that scenario.

"A common method that politicians use to influence the outcome of an election in their own favor is to confuse voters. This ruse is popular especially in Taiwan. Many Taiwanese voters are undereducated and have only a vague idea which candidates are really capable.

"Chen's UN bid is designed to confuse voters. The attempt is intended to create and promote the false idea that the DPP is more concerned about Taiwan's international standing and that its rival intends to reunify with the mainland at the expense of Taiwan residents' well-being.

"... Although the U.S. has broken off formal diplomatic relations with the ROC, Washington has been friendly with Taipei over the years. It remains the ROC's staunchest ally. Taiwan can't afford to lose the support of this friend, but many of the steps the DPP has taken in recent years have damaged the good ties between the two sides."

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